

Financial Aid News

WASHINGTON HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

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- [HECB secure Web site for aid administrators](#)
- [State Need Grant](#)
- [State Work Study](#)
- [Washington Promise Scholarship](#)
- [Educational Opportunity Grant](#)
- [Washington Scholars Program](#)
- [WAVE](#)
- [Other state aid programs](#)
- [Past issues of the *Financial Aid News* and other publications](#)
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- [Washington State Association of Student Employment Administrators](#)
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In this issue:

- HECB names new executive director
- Work group recommends changes for SNG program
- Governor calls for more financial aid and enrollments
- HECB adopts Interim Strategic Master Plan
- EOG available for winter and spring transfer students
- SWS awards grants for innovative program practices
- U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments in Promise Scholarship lawsuit
- Legislature convenes on Monday

HECB names new executive director

The Higher Education Coordinating Board today named Dr. James Sulton, Jr. as its executive director. He currently serves as executive director for the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education.

Sulton will begin his new duties on Feb. 1. He replaces Marc Gaspard, who left the board in September 2003 to join the private sector. Ruta Fanning has served as interim executive director since Gaspard's resignation.

Sulton has directed the New Jersey agency since 1999. The 11-member commission is responsible for many of the same policy, research and coordination tasks as the HECB, including developing a comprehensive higher education master plan.

As executive director for the board, Sulton will guide the agency that is responsible for all Washington state student financial aid programs as well as planning, coordination, monitoring and policy analysis for public higher education in Washington.

Board Chairman Bob Craves said Sulton is the perfect choice to lead the agency into the future.

"Dr. Sulton will be an excellent advocate for higher education in our state," Craves said. "He is a consensus builder and a proven leader who cares deeply about higher education, and about students. His thoughtful and passionate leadership will help us take on the challenges ahead without losing sight of the many strengths in our higher education system. He will truly be a champion for students and schools alike."

Prior to joining the New Jersey agency, Sulton served as the senior academic officer for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, working on state-level planning and policy development, institutional accountability, student transfer and other issues.

He also worked in the 26-campus University of Wisconsin System on such issues as long-range planning and budget development, as well as administering financial aid programs. A member of the organization's leadership team, Sulton was responsible for evaluating programs for minority and disadvantaged students, and helped campuses recruit and retain minority faculty and academic staff.

Sulton holds a Ph.D. and a master's degree in international relations from The Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Howard University. He was an assistant professor at Howard University in the early 1980s and later served as an adjunct faculty member for the African Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

One of Sulton's first tasks with the board will be guiding the agency's Strategic Master Plan through the 2004 legislative session. Earlier this month, the board submitted an interim plan to the governor and Legislature; the final version will be completed in June 2004. An article about the plan appears below and includes a link to the document online.

Work group recommends changes for SNG program

A work group of aid administrators, higher education stakeholders, and Higher Education Coordinating Board staff are recommending two changes to the State Need Grant (SNG) program.

One change would allow financial aid officers, on a case-by-case basis, to award the SNG to students pursuing a second associate degree within five years of earning their first associate degree. Current law requires SNG recipients to wait five years after earning their first associate degree before pursuing a second, unless the degrees are earned concurrently.

The other change would allow the SNG to exceed tuition by up to \$50. Program rules currently cap the grant at the actual cost of tuition. This change would affect community and technical college recipients who pay slightly lower tuition

when enrolled for 12 to 14 credits, and as a result don't qualify for the full SNG at their schools.

The work group also called on board staff to study several issues for future consideration, including:

- Whether the SNG should be available to students who attend less than half time (six credits) and are pursuing basic skills and job training.
- Whether grant amounts at private career colleges should be tied to tuition at state supported two-year colleges.
- The costs and risks of allocating SNG funds to colleges based on student eligibility for year-round attendance — instead of the current allocation model based on nine-month attendance.

The work group met five times between November 2002 and August 2003. This month they sent their recommendations and summaries of their discussions to the board's Financial Aid Committee.

The full Higher Education Coordinating Board will consider the work group's recommendations at its Jan. 15 meeting in Olympia. You can download the work group's memorandum, a roster of members, and briefing materials at the board's [Web site](#).

Governor calls for more financial aid and enrollments

Gov. Gary Locke has asked the Legislature to increase funding for scholarships and raise enrollments by an additional 5,200 students at the state's public colleges. About half of the proposed new enrollments would be for students entering high-demand fields at public two- and four-year colleges.

The proposals are part of a \$193 million supplemental operating budget that the governor submitted to the Legislature on Dec. 18. The budget would provide additional funds for the state fiscal year beginning July 1, 2004.

Financial aid provisions of the governor's spending plan for the 2004-05 academic year include:

- An additional \$6.7 million for Promise Scholarships — enough to increase the awards to 80 percent of the value of tuition at a community college. (Current funding covers about 43 percent.)
- A \$2 million increase for the Health Professional Scholarship and Loan Repayment program, to bring the annual appropriation to about \$3 million.
- A new program to provide \$4,000 scholarships to 40 students for internships in Washington D.C.

In a separate capital budget proposal, Locke also proposed \$98 million in improvements to higher education facilities. State bonds would pay for more than \$89 million of the new projects.

"The tough decisions we made in the last legislative session are paying off," Locke said at a news conference announcing the spending plan. "The economy is turning around. Our state government is on solid footing and our transportation system is on the mend."

Earlier this year, Locke — a Democrat — allied with fiscal conservatives in the Legislature — mostly Republicans — to eliminate a \$2.6 billion deficit without raising taxes.

But when releasing the supplemental budget proposal last month, Locke said that the state can afford the new spending and should make the investment. The plan has no proposed cuts, and provides funds for "programs people want most" and for efforts to improve the economy, the governor said.

Highlights of the proposal are available online: [Gov. Locke's 2004 supplemental budget](#).

State lawmakers will consider the governor's supplemental budget proposal — and develop some proposals of their own — during the 2004 legislative session that begins in Olympia on Jan. 12.

HECB adopts Interim Strategic Master Plan

The Higher Education Coordinating Board voted to adopt its 2004 Interim Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education during a special meeting on Dec. 15.

The board is charged with producing a policy blueprint for higher education every four years. This year, for the first time, the Legislature and governor directed the board to submit an interim strategic plan in December. The final version will be completed in June 2004, following legislative review.

The interim plan calls for a 20-percent increase by 2010 in the number of students who graduate from college each year, and contains several recommendations to strengthen the connection between the higher education system and the state's economic development objectives.

The plan also proposes that the State Need Grant cover the full cost of tuition and fees at public institutions, and that it serve students with family incomes at or below 65 percent of the state median. And it recommends the creation of a financial aid program for full-time, low-wage workers to attend college less than half time. The board presented a draft interim plan during its regular meeting on Oct. 29 and conducted public hearings in early November. The adopted plan incorporates several recommendations that were suggested during public

testimony, including strategies to strengthen linkages between higher education and the K-12 system.

The interim plan is available on the board's [Web site](#).

EOG available for winter and spring transfer students

The Educational Opportunity Grant (EOG) program is continuing to award students planning to transfer to a four-year college in winter or spring.

The EOG program provides \$2,500-a-year renewable grants to placebound state residents planning to complete a bachelor's degree at an eligible college.

For more information and EOG promotional materials, contact Dawn Cypriano at dawnc@hecb.wa.gov or (360) 753-7846. EOG applications are available online at the [EOG Web site](#).

SWS awards grants for innovative program practices

With the help of a grant from the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Columbia Basin College (CBC) will take a new approach to developing State Work Study (SWS) jobs for its students.

Staff at the Pasco college will help prospective student employees identify their individual talents using a nationally recognized tool called "Dependable Strengths." Meanwhile, graduate students from WSU-Tri Cities will help CBC staff cultivate new off-campus jobs for students. The combination of these efforts promise more career-related placements for SWS students. CBC staff will share the results of their efforts this spring at the annual meeting of the Washington State Association of Student Employment Administrators.

CBC was one of seven colleges to receive the SWS Administrative Grant this year. Other winners were Bates Technical College, Everett Community College, Highline Community College, St. Martin's College, Seattle University, and Spokane Community College.

Awards of up to \$5,000 each help the colleges improve their SWS programs by improving operations and fostering job development and placements. The board this year distributed \$25,597 in the special SWS grants.

U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments in Promise Scholarship lawsuit **High court decision could have "breathtaking" implications for church-state relations**

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on Dec. 2 concerning *Locke v. Davey* — a case that pits an individual's right to free religious expression against a state's right to deny public funds for religious instruction.

Repercussions from the case could affect more than the future of the Promise program or state-funded financial aid in general. *New York Times* reporter Linda Greenhouse said the case raises “the profound question of whether the government can ever carve religion out of a general benefit program.”

The widely publicized case concerns Joshua Davey, a graduate of Northwest College who sued Washington state for denying him a Promise Scholarship in 1999. Davey’s scholarship was rescinded after he declared a major in pastoral ministries. Court documents say that Davey was not eligible for the scholarship because Washington’s constitution and laws prohibit use of state money to fund religious education.

In July 2002, a three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Court of Appeals sided with Davey, ruling that — in denying the scholarship — the state had violated Davey’s constitutional rights to religious freedom and equal protection.

Since the Court of Appeals decision, the Higher Education Coordinating Board has opened eligibility for state financial aid to theology majors.

Washington Attorney General Christine Gregoire is asking the Supreme Court to overturn the lower court’s ruling and preserve the state’s right to deny public funds for religious education.

Thirty-six other states have restrictions on government funding of religion similar to Washington’s. Many of these restrictions are barriers to tuition-vouchers for education at religious schools.

Lawyers for Davey argued that the case should be decided on the merits of Davey’s individual religious rights. Solicitor General Theodore B. Olson, arguing on behalf of Davey for the Bush administration, said the case amounted to “the plainest form of religious discrimination.”

But according to Greenhouse, some of the justices appeared worried during arguments that a decision in Davey’s favor could have far-reaching consequences for the separation of church and state.

Some justices, she said, “appeared troubled ... over the prospect that the Constitution might require states to subsidize religious training if they choose to provide college scholarships for other kinds of study.”

Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and Justice Anthony M. Kennedy questioned whether a decision in Davey’s favor would require states that offer tuition vouchers as part of a “school choice” program to include religious schools.

“The implications are breathtaking,” Justice Stephen Breyer observed at one point during the proceedings.

The court is expected to rule on the case by June.

Legislature convenes on Monday

Financial Aid News will keep you informed during the session

The Legislature convenes in Olympia on Jan. 12 for a planned 60-day session. Lawmakers will develop a supplemental budget for the 2005 fiscal year, and they will work closely with the Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a final Strategic Master Plan for the state's higher education system.

Lawmakers will begin introducing legislation on Monday, and starting with the next issue, the *Financial Aid News* will keep you informed about bills that affect financial aid and higher education.

Two planned higher education bills are already slated for hearings. The Senate Higher Education Committee will hear testimony about a proposal to change the membership of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, as well as a proposal to require students to pay the full cost of remedial education at state-supported colleges. A list of scheduled hearings on financial aid and higher education is below.

Throughout the session, look for the *News* on Mondays in your electronic inbox. During the first month, the *News* will publish weekly to keep you informed about the latest legislative activities concerning financial aid and higher education. After that — as the flurry of new legislation subsides — we'll publish every other week with regular legislative updates. And if urgent issues arise at any point between our regularly scheduled issues, we'll be sure to inform you right away.

Like last year, our focus will shift to legislative affairs during the session and some of our outside news reporting will drop off. We will continue to bring you regular updates about state financial aid programs.

Legislative hearings on subjects of interest — Jan. 12 - 16

Monday, Jan. 12, 2004

Senate Higher Education Committee, 2 p.m., Senate Hearing Room 3

Public hearing, including:

- Changing membership on the Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Remedial education at state-supported colleges

Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2004

House Higher Education Committee, 10 a.m., House Hearing Room D

Work session:

- Update on 2003-05 higher education budget
- Governor's 2004 supplemental budget request for higher education
- Response by agencies and institutions

House Appropriations Committee, 3:30 p.m., House Hearing Room A

Work session:

- Governor's 2004 supplemental operating budget request

Thursday, Jan. 15, 2004

Senate Higher Education Committee, 10 a.m., Senate Hearing Room 3

Public hearing

Work session, including:

- 2004 Interim Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education

House Appropriations Committee, 3:30 p.m., House Hearing Room A

Public hearing:

- Governor's 2004 supplemental operating budget request

Senate Ways & Means Committee, 3:30 p.m., Senate Hearing Room 4 (TVW)

Work session:

- Governor's 2004 supplemental operating and capital budget requests

Online resources for tracking and analyzing legislation

Full text of bills and supporting materials:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/bills.cfm>

Complete legislative hearing schedule:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wsladm/calendar.cfm>

Live and archived Web broadcast of all hearings:

<http://www.tvw.org>

HECB 2004 legislative session site:

<http://www.hecb.wa.gov/Leg/index.asp>